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OCTOBER 2019 "CHOOSE PEACE"

Dear Friend,

Very recently it was announced that a minister serving at a mega-church had committed suicide. This was a young man in his 30's who left behind a wife and children. He was just another in a list of ministers who have taken their own lives over the past five years. However, that list does not include all Christians who have committed suicide. In fact, over the past few years, two of my own friends - both Christians - have taken their lives.

No doubt many are wondering how people washed in the blood of Jesus, and even filled with the Holy Spirit, reach the point of feeling the best choice in dealing with their struggles is death. Only a blind fool would think God is behind such actions.

I have noticed over the past 15-20 years there has been an increased focus on mental struggles. Therapy groups have been established throughout the country to help those facing such battles. Drugs to help people deal with fear, depression, anxiety and so on are advertised regularly on TV. In fact, it is even possible for some people to request and be given prescriptions for mental health drugs from their family doctor *without ever seeing a therapist for an evaluation!*

It's one thing for the world to seek for and embrace chemical therapy as a solace for their emotional turmoil, but what about Christians? Now, I firmly agree with the fact that there are genuine medical conditions which are helped through the use of certain medication. However, my observation is that an alarming number of Christians are allowing the world to diagnose them with fear, depression, anxiety and the emotional despair accompanying those negative emotions. Then they agree to take drugs that will alter their mindset and produce a false sense of peace and relief; when the drugs wear off, the cycle repeats itself. "I'm going through a rough time," seems to be an excuse for medically modifying their mental and emotional state.

This might make one wonder how Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, James, all the other Apostles and first century Christians dealt with the rough times they faced. If suicide were truly a legitimate option in dealing with "hopeless" situations, those people were prime candidates. Yet, they persevered and made it through their "valley of the shadow of death." Yes, many of them were martyred, but they remained victorious prior to their death.

The truth is, Christians who yield to the world's way of dealing with circumstantial emotional struggles do so because they do not know who they are in Christ, they do not know what they have in Christ, they do not know the power of God's Word, they do not know God's promises and they do not know their Heavenly Father. It's one thing to acknowledge what is recorded in scripture, but it's an entirely different matter to live according what is recorded in scripture.

Again, I am well aware that some people are genuinely diagnosed with a legitimate chemical imbalance impacting their thoughts and emotions, and their condition is treated with drugs. But I simply do not believe that what seems to be a rampant diagnosis of depression within the Church is due to a chemical imbalance. Essentially, it has become too easy for Christians to turn to the

world for relief instead of turning to God. Which do you think is more effective, drugs or God? Which do you think can make a permanent change, drugs or God?

In the popular worship song, “No Longer Slaves” the chorus states, “I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God.” Sadly, too many Christians allow themselves to be enslaved to fear, worry, anxiety and depression, even though they are a child of God and joint-heir with Jesus.

Do you go through periods of depression, worry, fear, panic, anxiety and other such emotions or are you battling them now? Let’s see what God has to say.

The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace. (Psalm 29:11)

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (Psalm 55:22)

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

³Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. ⁴Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (Isaiah 26:3-4)

¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ³To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15)

³Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; ⁴Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

⁶Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:6-8)

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:5)

How much more does God have to say to convince His children that He offers them total and permanent relief and deliverance from depression and other such emotions? It is not wrong to have people pray for us, but God's Word is our sure foundation and guarantee for supernatural peace to govern every problem and situation. The truth is, Christians have no legitimate excuse for yielding to troubling emotions when they could choose to live in the supernatural peace of God that passes all human understanding.

Turn the passages above into confessions and declarations of worship about who you are, what you have and how free Jesus has made you. Choose to live in the glory of divine peace made available to you through salvation. For example:

Lord, You have given me strength and I live in peace. I cast all my burdens on You and You sustain me. You are the healer of all my brokenness. I choose to keep my mind on You, and You keep me in perfect peace. I declare that my heart is not troubled and it is not afraid because I live in the peace You have given me. I am not in bondage to a spirit of fear. I am not troubled, but I am continually comforted by You. Your peace guards my heart and mind, and I fill my thoughts with things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy. I have the spirit of a sound mind, for You have given it to me. I am not tormented by fear, worry, anxiety, panic or depression because the power of Your perfect love drives all those things from me. I AM FREE!

Furthermore, don't forget that your mind is **YOURS!** When thoughts opposed to God's promises identified above try to dominate your mindset, take a stand against them and *do not allow them to take up residence and torment you.*

⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

The phrase "casting down" comes from the Greek words *kata* (down) and *haireo* (take for oneself). The image here is of an individual taking authority over something that is a genuine threat to his wellbeing and forcefully dismissing it from his life. We are the ones who must do the casting down; God will not do it for us. He has given us the weapons for this warfare. In addition to confessing God's Word, I strongly encourage you to spend time worshiping when those troubling emotions attack. Worship is an amazing weapon to use in fighting off depression, worry, and so forth. Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote,

***¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
¹⁹Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and
making melody in your heart to the Lord; ²⁰Giving thanks always for all things
unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:18-20)***

Briefly, he's telling Christians not to use alcohol as a solution to inner struggles, but minister to ourselves through worship. Neither alcohol nor psychotropic medication can produce the kind of peace and presence of God that comes through genuine praise and worship.

Yes, but Brother Jim, what if it's a demonic attack coming against my mind and emotions? Well, what if it is? Don't we as Christians have authority over demons? If it's a demonic attack, then counterattack with your authority and the Name of Jesus.

Yes, but Brother Jim, the doctors diagnosed me with a genuine chemical imbalance that requires certain types of medication. Then take your medication. But remember, by Jesus' stripes you were healed, and that includes chemical imbalances in the brain. Confess healing scriptures and call your chemical imbalance healed and continue to confess the scriptures listed above for your peace and soundness of mind. Do NOT see the medication as being equally effective to the completed work of Jesus in your life.

The truth is, no matter what we face, no matter what problems arise, God's Word reveals the path to the answer. For Christians, the Bible is our manual for living. But it goes back to what I mentioned earlier: If Christians don't know who they are in Christ, don't know what they have in Christ, don't know the power of God's Word, don't know God's promises and they don't know their Heavenly Father, they will needlessly endure burdens they were never meant to carry.

Suicide is not the answer; God has provided a way of escape from all emotional upheaval. But what if a Christian commits suicide; will that person still go to Heaven? Some believe suicide is self-murder and once dead, the person has no opportunity to repent; therefore, that individual will not go to Heaven. But what is the truth? I have a sermon titled *Christians and Suicide* that will provide you with answers to some of these challenging questions. You can order a copy using the form on the next page. I'll close this month's letter with some lyrics from another very popular worship song, this one titled "Good, Good Father,"

You're a good, good Father
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are
And I'm loved by you
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am
Because you are perfect in all of your ways
You are perfect in all of your ways
You are perfect in all of your ways to us

May God's presence fill your life!

Jim

***** IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT *****

As many of you know, Grace Ministries Bible College is a part of our overall outreach. Many of our students are prisoners. Some of these inmates are in institutions which only allow them to have cassette tapes. In order to accommodate those regulations, we send the audio of their lessons on tapes.

However, we will no longer be fulfilling requests for cassette tapes from non-inmates. For the time being, we will still honor requests for individual non-series sermons on CD's; but keep in mind that individual, non-series sermons in MP3 format going back to 2001 can be downloaded from our website at no charge. All teaching series are also available at our website in MP3 format for download at no charge.

MP3 players have dramatically come down in cost. It is even possible to use a smart phone and load it with MP3 files, using it as a music player (I took one of my wife's old phones and put the entire Bible on it in MP3 format and play it while I'm working.) One lady in her 90's had very poor internet service where she lived; so, she would go to the library and download sermons to her MP3 player. There are now so many inexpensive options for MP3 players, and downloading is almost instantaneous when compared to waiting for a cassette tape to be mailed.

Thank you for your understanding in this. We will continue to do our best to utilize the improvements in technology to more effectively fulfill God's plan for this ministry.

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☐ Check this box to receive a CD of the sermon, *Christians and Suicide*.

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